



NEWS RELEASE

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MAY 22, 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FAUCETT, MO., MAN SENTENCED FOR INVOLVEMENT IN ST. JOSEPH MARIJUANA DISTRIBUTION RING

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Faucett, Mo., man was sentenced in federal court today for his role in a conspiracy to distribute marijuana in St. Joseph, Mo.

Gerry Taylor, 27, of Faucett, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Howard F. Sachs this morning to five years and 10 months in federal prison without parole.

On Aug. 14, 2002, **Taylor** pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute 1,000 kilograms or more of marijuana between June 1997 and Aug. 22, 2001 in St. Joseph, and elsewhere.

Taylor is the third of six co-defendants to be sentenced for being involved in the conspiracy to distribute more than 2,200 pounds of marijuana in the St. Joseph area. All six co-defendants were charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Aug. 22, 2001, in Kansas City.

Phillip J. Calandra, 26, of Kansas City, Mo., was sentenced to four years in federal prison without parole on May 21, 2003.

On Nov. 20, 2001, **Calandra** pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute 1,000 kilograms or more of marijuana in St. Joseph, and elsewhere. **Calandra** also admitted that the marijuana distribution began in June 1997 and continued until Aug. 22, 2001.

Joshua M. Brightwell, 21, of Kansas City, was sentenced to five years in federal prison without parole on Aug. 15, 2002. On Jan. 4, 2002, he pleaded guilty to his role in the conspiracy.

Three other co-defendants also have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing hearings.

On Feb. 14, 2002, **Arturo Velasquez**, 38, of El Paso, Texas, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute 1,000 kilograms or more of marijuana between Jun 1997 and Aug. 22, 2001.

On Feb. 14, 2002, **Angel M. Torres**, 28, of El Paso, also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute 1,000 kilograms of marijuana between June 1997 and Aug. 22, 2001.

On Feb. 1, 2002, **Darrell L. Harris, Jr.**, 25, of Faucett, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute 1,000 kilograms of marijuana between June 1997 and Aug. 22, 2001.

As a result of pleading guilty, each of the remaining co-defendants may face a maximum sentence of up to life in federal prison without parole, plus fines up to \$4 million. Their sentences will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. Sentencing hearings will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence report by the U.S. Probation Office.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Lajuana M. Counts. It was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the Buchanan County, Mo., Drug Strike Force, and the Independence, Mo., Police Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow